

Core Team/Stakeholders Committee Meeting

State Resource Strategy Meeting

February 19, 2010

Idaho Panhandle National Forests Supervisor's Office

Coeur d'Alene, Idaho

Attendees

Coeur d'Alene:

- Dave Stephenson, Idaho Department of Lands
- Serena Carlson, Intermountain Forest Association
- Ed Warner, Idaho Department of Lands – Forest Legacy Program
- Mary Fritz, Idaho Department of Lands
- Craig Foss, Idaho Department of Lands
- Jill Cobb, USDA Forest Service-IPNF and IDL, Note Taker

Moscow:

- Steve Kimball, Idaho Department of Lands
- Ree Brannon, Clearwater RC and D
- Steve Hallenhorst, University of Idaho
- Jeff Handel, Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation
- Cindy Lane, Forest Service: Clearwater, Nez Perce/ Payette National Forests
- John DeGroot, Nez Perce Tribe

Boise:

- Bob Unnash, The Nature Conservancy
- Greg Servheen, Idaho Department of Fish and Game

The focus for today's discussion will be the Craig Camas, Hells Gate and West Central priority areas.

Before diving into today's topics, Steve asked the group for thoughts regarding yesterday's meeting.

- It was suggested that the St. Joe Clearwater priority area include the Dworshak Area.
- Wildland Urban Interface Issue at Dworshak:
 - Jeff Handel shared some potential strategies for the Dworshak Campground that is owned by the COE but leased by the State. Jeff would like to treat hazardous fuels in the Dworshak area. The Dept of Parks has received funding to do treat fuels above Freeman Lake Campground. The project is planned for this summer with new funds. The plan is to treat 100 acres between the campground and adjacent homes.

- John DeGroot said that Potlatch has identified work in the Wildland Urban Interface. In next 3 to 5 years, there are no plans for additional recreational developments. Funding is drying up for recreation.
- Municipal Water Supplies
 - Cindy Lane said the community of Elk River is concerned that their municipal watershed is being impacted by recreationalists. They are working with the Forest Service to protect domestic water supplies.
 - The need to protect domestic water supplies is a real need for every community and should be included as an overarching strategy. Municipal water and surface wells were included in public water supplies as a layer for the geospatial assessment.
- Reforestation after agricultural conversion.
 - On the Palouse, the riparian areas were probably missed in the initial assessment. But these riparian areas are the most important for restoration in Palouse. Restoring the riparian areas would be a great opportunity to work with private property owners.
 - A potential contact for riparian restoration opportunities would be the Palouse Clearwater Environmental Institute- Contact to be made by Steve Hollenhorst.
- Recreational Strategies
 - Trail opportunities exist along the riparian zones. The Palouse Clearwater Environmental Institute is active with trails in this area. Ree will find out from Margaret Little John to see about trails.
 - Need to check with Friends of Moscow Mountain as a source for possible plans. There might be some large Cedar groves under IDL management. There was mention that the IDL would like to explore trading out of the large Cedar grove. The county wants to purchase and turn it into a park. Jeff Handel knows more about this parcel. The goal is to protect key remnant habitats especially near Moscow Mountain. Steve will discuss the "At Risk Ecosystems" with Terri Jain at the RMRS.
 - Another group is the Latah Trail Foundation. Look for key expansion and new trails. This is a new focus for the whole state that we hope to capture. Contact through Ree.
- Native American/Cultural :
 - The National Park Service Plan for the Nez Perce Trail and the Lolo Trail should be reviewed . The tribe has a list of sensitive locations and this strategy will to continue to protect the cultural resources. The group should explore being as proactive as possible with the tribes regarding possible strategies. Question was raised as to how proactive would the tribe want to be. For example, would they want to be part of efforts like stream bank inventories? Contact for the tribe is John DeGroot. John would like to have someone to present the strategy to the counsel. Steve said he could do this and John will let Steve know when this is scheduled.

CRAIG-CAMAS:

- Dave provide a summary for the State assessment summary for the Craig Camas area, that includes the Snake River and Salmon Country. In this priority area, wildfire is a high risk. Both wildlife and the timber market are also very important. It appears that tourism, water and weeds are also driving issues here.

Wildlife:

- In an earlier conversation with Cindy, Greg Servheen said he was concerned about wildlife in the Craig Mountain area. Craig Mtn also has major forest health issues.
- The local Tribe and the local Fish and Game officials have different approaches to game management. Sheep are an issue here.
- Wildlife seems to be driving this area as well. We have discussed Elk and Sheep, Ponderosa Pine and grassland Complex.

Wildfire and the Wildland Urban Interface:

- It is important to note that this is not identified as a Wildland Urban Interface Risk, but rather it is a forest health issue.
- Uncharacteristic fire in the area is attributed to dying Grand fir. This priority area gets large fires almost every other year.
- Some of the local agencies are trying to coordinate fire and management activities.

Municipal Watershed:

- The geospatial assessment missed this municipal watershed issue. This area holds the watershed for Lewiston. The group called the Waters of the West is working on the Sweetwater drainage. Ree will contact the group for additional information regarding their work for both the Sweetwater drainage and Paradise Creek in Latah County. Ree's contact will be Scott Eckberg.

Recreation

- This is a high recreation area for Lewiston. Hells Canyon has world renown rafting and fishing opportunities. Additionally, the area has the Rails to Trails programs in place. Recreation is a huge economic impact to this area. Should try to contact any local outfitters and guides associations. Holly Enderspee associated with CBC and Back Country Hunters and Anglers is a potential contact. Our activities might be affecting the hunters (upland birds and elk).
- There is a heightened concern with access in the area, especially a concern with long term degradation by four wheelers. The concern over off road vehicles may be an opportunity for creating collaborative groups.
- All the issues are focused on strategically trying to maintain tourism industry. The water is completely separate.

- The strategy would benefit from a BLM contact to discuss the Salmon River BLM connection and their management of recreation. Steve will contact with Bill Ronaut of the BLM. The Salmon Recovery Plan is tightly linked to how recreation is managed in this area.

Existing Collaborative Groups

- Existing collaborative groups are somewhat limited. Currently, the Fish and Game, IDL and Tribe meet regularly to coordinate activities. There are no other known collaborative groups in the area.
- The Lewiston Orchard Irrigation District is in the middle of the Salmon Recovery Plan because of the potentially conflicting needs for water for irrigation and water for salmon.

Weeds

- Fish and Game are interested in attacking weeds aggressively in this area. Is there a Cooperative Weed Management Association working on weeds in this area? Bob Unnash will contact TNC and IDFG. Tri State might be involved with this.
- The Nature Conservancy has a weed collaborative project where Yellow Star Thistle was the focus. The contact for TNC would Art Kalsama. The contact for the weed eradication effort by the Idaho Fish and Game would be Jim White. Ree will be the contact for Tri State. Cindy will discuss with Jim White for Craig Mtn.

Timber

- The tribe is looking at a strategy to tackle large scale reforestation where settlement (especially agriculture) had removed timber. The tribe is actively identifying those areas that are now agricultural grounds, but which were originally covered by timber. There is a huge band of forest Orofino and Craig Mountain that has been converted to agricultural lands. This is a huge reforestation opportunity and a plan to attempt to reforest a couple of thousand acres over the next few years. In the Palouse, the farmers have been encouraged to reforest with trees via the soil conservation district to prevent erosion. Much of the Palouse area was all forest in the past. The group wants in include a strategy to encourage willing property owners to reforest highly erosion prone agricultural properties.
- What is the success of planting timber back onto these converted agricultural lands? Planting in the old fields is expensive because of voles and big game grazing. Most of the success comes from planting with Ponderosa Pine.
- Dave Stephenson will be lead for Urban Forest issues for reforestation

HELLS GATE

This area covers the greater Lewiston area. The highlighted areas showing this area were not highlighted from the assessment but rather from subsequent discussions. The area around greater Lewiston was highlighted because of the high percentage of impervious surfaces, degraded air quality from fires, and increasing recreation pressures.

It was discussed that all the larger communities should be highlighted so they can apply for funds as a priority landscape. There is a clear connectivity issue between the town of Lewiston down the Clearwater and Lewiston to Craig Mountain.

We really meant to show Lewiston proper and not such a large area. The urban community should be the focus. Why did we not separate out the towns in the north? Because for those towns to the north, the forest comes up the town's edge. This is a far different situation than the towns to the south.

There was some discussion to change name from Hells Gate to Lewiston Urban.

Urban Forestry

- For Lewiston, the focus will be only Urban Forest opportunities. This will be the same approach used when we discuss the Auger Falls Complex and Snake River complex. We will make these polygons community centric.
- Mike Bowman resigned from the Forestry Committee of the RC and D. Not sure if he will continue to participate in this effort. Dave will call him and ask him to review the draft and ask about his continued participation.

Water Quality

- According to the review, we need to protect the watershed from weeds and fire. Both water quality and fire issues are important to the local communities, but these same issues did not show up on the assessment as high priority.
- The riparian area along the corridor is important.

WEST CENTRAL IDAHO

David Stephenson provided a brief review of the area. According to the Assessment, the area ranked high in the following areas: Forest threat with emphasis on Mountain Pine Beetle, Climate Change, Biodiversity, Water Quality, Water Quantity, Forest based markets and Wildfire. Cindy conducted interviews for this area regarding existing plans.

Wildlife

- The State strategy should include the Payette Wildlife Conversation Areas Strategy.
- In this priority area, the restoration needs are driven by Threatened and Endangered Species such as northern Idaho ground squirrel and white headed woodpecker.

Wildfire, Timber and Biomass

- As part of the Payette Forest Plan effort, the Forest hired Peggy Morgan to document the Forest's fire history and help determine the historical range of variability.
- The geospatial exercise missed the large open grown Ponderosa Pine stands that are critical to this area.

- Respondents want to create jobs and support green energy with use of Biomass. Using RMEF to help in their collaborative along with Woody Biomass Partnership. Steve will talk to Morris about Biomass. Serena will make contacts as well to discuss biomass?
- Forest proposes thinning and using fire as a tool to reduce stocking and favor Ponderosa pine stands. There is a plan to put in for a landscape restoration grant and will use stewardship contract to get work done.
- Large issue with Fire Risk and the forests think it is much stronger than our assessment showed. One strategy needed is to understand the mortality associated with Mountain Pine Beetle and wildfire. More development must recognize fire risks as more home sites get developed in the WUI.

Fisheries

- Bull trout are in the area. There is a recovery plan through Fish and Wildlife Service. Need to contact someone in Boise. Steve will find contact.
- South Fork of the Salmon River is listed as a low priority. The locals feel that our data understates the fisheries issues. The tribe has considerable investment in the South Fork. Still need to get refinement on where our fish data is. The land ownership of the South Fork of the Salmon is almost 100% USFS. We need to ask the FS for recovery plans for fisheries. Steve will ask Fish and Wildlife Service for recovery plans.

Development

- The corporate timber land that Potlatch owns is in jeopardy of being developed. Potlatch is not interested in acquiring additional conservation easements. If the strategy is there could we provide incentives to not divide the land for development.
- Keep the working land working is the over-arching theme. Consider changing zoning for these areas.
- Use the Western Forestry Legacy template to develop strategies to working forests working. Idaho Working Land coalition is working on a bill to keep working forests working. Ed Warner will contact.
- In RC and D, Ree will call Wade Brown with Central Highlands RC and D Coordinator.
- Cindy brought up that the ranches are not being addressed. Perhaps because they are not forested lands. Therefore, no ranchers were contacted.

Priority Areas :

- The Forest Service suggested that the South Fork of the Salmon be a priority landscape. None of the Middle Fork of the Salmon is included either because the area does not have multiple highly ranked issues.
- We will have in our narrative an explanation as to why the South Fork of the Salmon is not a priority landscape. Fish alone was not enough to elevate it to a priority landscape.

- We agree that we need to prioritize the areas carefully. Not all the areas are highlighted because not all of the areas light up several screens. These are the priority areas currently, but that does not mean this would not change with new data and changed conditions.

Urban Areas

- From the communities of Weiser and Cascade, we understand that there are community specific needs. As we are dealing with issues we need to include strategies that would work for urban landscapes.
- For example, municipal water supplies are very important to these communities. Getting the cities to participate in programs and projects to improve water quality. Be in communication with cities about protection of their municipal water supplies. Concerns with fire in municipal watersheds.
- The group feels like we did not connect with counsel officials in terms of their perspective of the urban areas. Ree will make contact with Wade Brown.

Recreation

- This area is a heavily used recreation area. The water sources are a heavy draw for tourism (Payette and Cascade Lakes). Need to coordinate with the Bureau of Reclamation at Cascade Lake. Jeff will initiate a contact at the Bureau of Recreation from the area.
- There is a concern with transportation pressure in the areas. John Roberts developed a map where recreation was heavily impacting IDL lands. He is in the Southwestern IDL Office. Steve will contact him for information and possibly if a strategy went with it.

Existing Collaboration /Strategies for the West Central Area

- The Payette Forest Coalition is a cooperative to include in the State Strategy.
- Payette Wildlife Conservation Area Strategy
- Revised Payette Forest Plan (2003)
- Research on HRV and fire history by Penny Morgan
- Friends of Weiser River has successfully coordinated restoration in the riparian areas
- The people in the Payette area need funding to assist with facilitation of meetings. It was mentioned that outside parties worry that the right partners are not at the table for effective collaboration.
- It was also stated that some think that collaborative efforts may not be supportive of the Forest Plan. In the priority area, we need to include the South Fork of the Payette River because their WUI. Additionally, the south Fork of Salmon is a steelhead stronghold and we need to use fire as a tool. The community feels that they are losing their working forests.
- Mary Fritz has list of Stakeholders for the Payette Forest Coalition that can provide contacts. Dave Terrill and Morris Huffman are the co chairs of the Payette Forest Coalition. They will be contacted by Greg Servheen.

Funds to Leverage for the West Central Area

- Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation
- Woody Biomass Partnership
- Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Program
- Stewardship contracting

Concerns for the core team to discuss for the West Central Area:

- South Fork of the Payette is not in the polygon of the priority landscape yet there are WUI concerns for small communities like Yellow Pine/Warren, etc.
- South Fork of Salmon River has high restoration need for anadromous as it is a steelhead stronghold – harvest is not an appropriate tool but fire may be.
- Area is pretty well blocked up with federal and state land; but on the edges the large private landowners are entering into the real estate business and selling off lands – losing the working forest

Planning for the upcoming Meetings on March 9th and 10th

- Sharon LeBrecque will help invite FS people to represent these priority areas.
- The Core team will meet at the IPNF SO.
- Steve is working on getting a connection at Twin Falls and/or Pocatello for the meetings.
- Steve is responsible for the following contacts:
 - The new RC and D coordinator, Brent Ingles to participate.
 - Through Brent, Steve may be able to invite Debbie Daine, the Twin Falls County Commissioner
 - Shoshone Bannock Tribe
 - BLM Mike DeArmond
 - Bill Renoue
 - Salmon River Collaborative
 - Greater Yellowstone Coalition
 - Idaho Outfitter Guide (Steve)
 - Two Collaborative Groups for Lemhi
- Dave Stephenson is responsible for the following contacts
 - Holly Huggins and Bill Moore
 - Urban Forestry Counsel
- Ree is responsible for the following contacts
 - NRCS folks
 - Portnuef Watershed Group
 - Pocatello and Idaho Falls (RC and D) Coordinators
- Greg is responsible for the following contacts
 - Fish and Game Contacts
 - Fish and Wildlife Service
- Ed Warner will contact Jim Ebanoff , National Park Service

There is a need to schedule another meeting on April 1st from 9 to noon in CDA. At that meeting, we will review a working draft.

Also, we still need to have folks pull out the salient portions of the plans. We need to have these salient strategies and actions received by March 9th meetings. Please send in your bibliographies and/or URL links as well. Please send write ups to Steve.

Notes recorded by Jill Cobb

Edited by: Steve Kimball